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The six hundred and fourteenth meeting of the Club was held at the Rembrandt Hotel, London, on the 18th February, 1964.

Chairman: Mr. R. S. R. Fitter

Members present, 18; guests, 6.

Mr. Colin Osman spoke on the racing pigeon, its management and methods of training in this country.

Some observations on pigeons in Addis Ababa

by L. R. PITWELL AND DEREK GOODWIN

Received 2nd December, 1963

INTRODUCTION

For the past year Mr. Pitwell, who works at the University College of Addis Ababa, has been corresponding with me (D.G.) about the pigeons in and around Addis Ababa. Many of his observations seem not to have been previously recorded, and to be worth publishing. The actual field observations on the birds were all made by Pitwell: Goodwin is responsible for comparisons with behaviour of other pigeon species (or the same species elsewhere), speculations and references. The general distribution of the species in the area is not discussed, as this has been dealt with previously by Guichard (1950).

A point that should be emphasised is that Addis Ababa is a town where feral populations of *Columba livia* have not yet established themselves. Should they do so in the future the effect on other species would be of interest.

NOTES ON SPECIES

Columba albitorques Rüppell. White-collared Pigeon

Very common in and near Addis Ababa although within the city area possibly less numerous than *Columba guinea* and *Streptopelia semitorquata*. Always near buildings, cliffs or gullies where it breeds and roosts. In the course of a recent journey from Addis Ababa to the Shoan Plateau between Entoto and the Blue Nile this species was seen only near suitable rock formations or in villages whereas *C. guinea* was seen everywhere.

Nests on sheltered ledges of buildings. Freely enters buildings and nests inside them when given the opportunity. From the readiness with which it does this there can be no doubt that in natural cliff sites it will nest well inside caves or dark cavities, as does *C. livia*. Has been observed nesting or incubating from September to January.

Feeds on the ground within the town, in market places, the university campus grounds and other open spaces as well as in fields. Besides grain and other seeds it readily takes bread and similar artificial foods, at least many individuals do so. At feeding and resting places often forms large mixed flocks with *C. guinea*. These flocks may fly together and not separate when, for example, something has scared them all into flight. This only happens where large numbers of both species have gathered together at a good feeding ground or some densely populated cliff. Otherwise both species are usually in pairs, small mono-specific groups, or sometimes single birds.

A most striking feature about this species is that in flight it makes, with each flap of the wings, a whistling, creaking sound rather like a creaking door hinge. No other local pigeon makes such a noise which is characteristic of *C. albitorques* and heard whenever it flies. It can also fly vertically up the face of a cliff or hover in front of a crowded or small ledge on which it wishes to alight. These forms of flight have not been seen in *C. guinea* although *C. livia* can fly vertically and hover in a manner similar to but perhaps less highly developed than that of *C. albitorques*. The display flight of the White-collared Pigeon consists of gliding followed by an upward swoop; it is not accompanied by loud wing-claps such as characterise the display flights of most other pigeons.

Columba guinea Linn. Speckled Pigeon

Probably the most numerous species in Addis Ababa. In mixed flocks at village markets it usually slightly outnumbers *C. albitorques*. Nests on sheltered ledges on the *outsides* of buildings. The sites chosen are similar to some used by *C. albitorques* but *C. guinea* never nests inside a building, in an attic, or on an internal cornice or similar place as *C. albitorques* often does nor has it been seen to fly under arches or to enter buildings. It sometimes nests in sites previously used by *C. albitorques* but there is no evidence of either species forcibly displacing the other from a nesting site.

Seen on nests in March and April and display flights and copulation seen also in September and October among birds that were probably nesting or about to do so. Seen feeding both in open country and in market places. In the latter many individuals eat bread as well as grain and other seeds. Does not perch on small projections, narrow ledges or wires running near buildings as *C. albitorques* readily does.

Sometimes in flocks of twenty or more but these are often mere aggregations at feeding areas and the birds arrive and depart in pairs, small groups or singly.

In display flight the wings are clapped with wide downward strokes similar to those of *C. livia*. Display, voice and the copulation ceremony similar to what has been previously described for captive specimens (Goodwin 1956).

Columbia livia Gmelin. Rock, Feral and Domestic Pigeons

Neither wild nor feral populations of this species occur in Addis Ababa. A few domestic pigeons occur in the neighbourhood of the former Guenet Luel Palace west stables. They are, presumably, fed by people and have not been seen further afield than the main palace, the adjacent stables and the garages. They have never even been seen to cross the paddock to the north stables only 200 metres away.

Streptopelia decipiens (Hartlaub and Finsch) Mourning Collared Dove

Abundant in the wooded residential districts of Addis Ababa but not common in the more treeless parts. Part of the population is absent from June to August, presumably having migrated to lower, drier areas, but returns before the rains end.

Only observed nesting and perching in trees. Often seen singly. It seems unlikely that Cheesman (1935) could have overlooked this species and, if not, then it must be a relative newcomer to the area since he did not record it. Between 1945 and 1948 Guichard (1950) found it abundant.

Streptopelia semitorquata (Rüppell) Red-eyed Dove

Not as numerous as the previous species but quite common and its loud, distinctive advertising coo is often heard. It is rarest from June to August when many individuals have, presumably, gone elsewhere. Also found primarily in wooded areas but habitually perches on bridges on the Addis Ababa-Nekemti road. All nests seen have been in trees.

Streptopelia lugens (Rüppell) Dusky Turtle Dove

We consider it regrettable that many reference books use the very misleading name "Pink-breasted Dove" for this species, the only African *Streptopelia*, except *S. reichenowi*, which has *not* a pink breast. In life it looks predominantly dark bluish with black neck patches and conspicuous orange-brown markings on the inner secondaries.

Present in Addis Ababa but commoner outside the city where it is found in clumps of trees close to villages. Not seen from June to August when it may migrate. This species and *S. semitorquata* have both often been observed feeding on the ground under cover of bushes and trees, presumably on seeds, and also taking young leaves from a succulent shrub.

No other species has been identified by L. R. P. in Addis Ababa although *Columba arquatrix*, *Streptopelia capicola*, and *S. senegalensis* have been seen in nearby areas.

DISCUSSION

The presence of numerous individuals of three *Streptopelia* species is hardly surprising in view of the abundance of doves of this genus throughout most of Africa and the fact that Addis Ababa is rich in trees and shrubs. Except in the small central shopping area, there are trees everywhere.

More surprising is the co-existence in large numbers of two *Columba* species of rather similar size and habits; the widespread *C. guinea*, which occurs throughout most of Africa south of the Sahara except in forest regions, and the endemic *C. albitorques* which is entirely confined to Eritrea and central Ethiopia. This latter species would appear to be as highly adapted to cliff and cave dwelling as is the Rock Pigeon *C. livia*. In Addis Ababa it clearly fills the ecological niche commonly taken in towns elsewhere by feral populations of *C. livia*. If strayed domestic pigeons become well-established in Ethiopian towns they might constitute a serious, if long-term, threat to the continued existence of the White-collared Pigeon.

The apparent disinclination of *C. guinea*, in Addis Ababa, to nest inside buildings suggests that some degree of ecological separation may have evolved here. Elsewhere *C. guinea* has been recorded nesting inside roofs and outbuildings (Jackson 1938). It may, however, only reflect preferences where nest sites are abundant, as there appear to be many more suitable nest sites in Addis Ababa than are occupied. When feeding at market places the two species take the same foods and must be in competition and it would be interesting to know whether they take different foods when in the fields. Since both are ground-feeding, primarily seed-eating species which differ only slightly in size, there may well be competition here also. The overlap in food and nesting requirements between the two certainly seem likely to be much greater than between the Wood Pigeon *C. palumbus* and feral pigeon *C. livia* in London (Goodwin 1960) where the former species is largely a tree feeder and only artificial foods and a few temporarily superabundant natural foods are taken in quantity by both.

At the moment, *C. albitorques* and *C. guinea* appear able to co-exist successfully in Addis Ababa and elsewhere in Ethiopia. If this is so then, presumably, their requirements must differ or else, in spite of their apparent abundance, they are being kept down by predation below the numerical level at which competition between them would operate. We may, on the other hand, be witnessing a phase in the process of inter-specific competition, which will end in the replacement of *C. albitorques* by *C. guinea*. I, (D.G.) can recall only two other cases of the co-existence of two related *Columba* species of (so far as is known) similar feeding habits. In north-eastern Tibet, the Snow Pigeon *C. leuconota* Vigors and the Eastern Rock Pigeon *C. rupestris* Pallas, roost and breed at different altitudes but feed in the same fields in the cultivated areas (Schäfer 1938). They are known to take the same cultivated grains but it is not recorded to what extent the wild foods taken by them differ. In Ulan Bator, in Mongolia, one has an even more surprising situation (Grummt 1961). Here, both the Eastern Rock Pigeon and feral domestic pigeons co-exist in numbers and show no apparent difference in ecology. The situation in Ulan Bator may be a very temporary one, however, in view of the recent growth of that city.

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Taxonomic position of the genus *Culicicapa* Swinhoe (Muscicapidae)

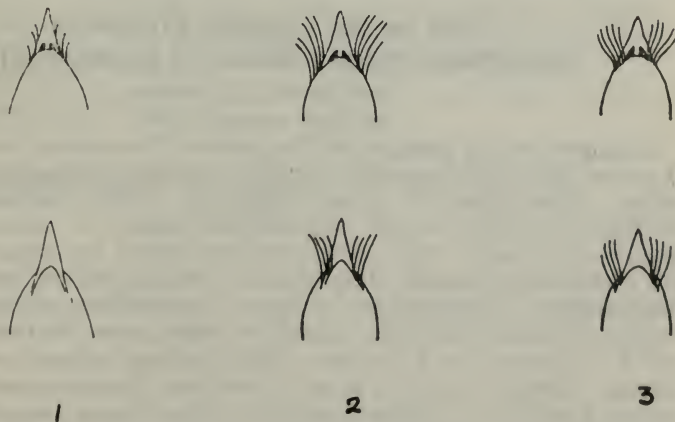
by SHANE A. PARKER

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Culicicapa contains two predominantly yellow-green and bright yellow flycatchers, *C. ceylonensis* (Indo-Malaya, China) and *C. helianthea* (Philippines and Celebes). Vaurie, (1953) in a paper dealing with the Muscipapini, concludes that *Culicicapa* might prove referable to the Rhipidurini upon further study. The purpose of this note is to show that there are adequate grounds for including *Culicicapa* in the latter tribe.

Vaurie (p.531) shows that *Culicicapa* differs from all muscipapine genera in the arrangement and number of the rictal setae. This feature of *Culicicapa* is repeated in all species of *Rhipidura*.

As regards habits, Vaurie considers *Culicicapa* to be far more restless and gregarious than the rest of the Muscipapini. Salim Ali (1949) describes the ceaseless acrobatics and foraging of *C. ceylonensis*. Smythies (1953) also notes tail-fanning in this species. According to Heinroth (in Stresemann 1940) *C. helianthea* is similar in its actions to its congener. Though differing from the true flycatchers in the mode of feeding, the species of



Arrangement of rictal setae (1) *Muscicapa* (2) *Rhipidura* (3) *Culicicapa*
 a. Dorsal view b. Ventral view